

# THE BOY AT SCHOOL

## THE STORY OF SAMUEL



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# THE BOY AT SCHOOL

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THE STORY OF SAMUEL

BY  
J. H. WILLARD

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ILLUSTRATED

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## THE BOY AT SCHOOL

### THE STORY OF SAMUEL

**M**ANY years had passed since Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Land of Promise. They had been kept together under Joshua, the successor of Moses, and during the lives of some of the elders who outlived him, but were now sharing the land with various heathen nations.

Because of jealousy among the tribes, fear, laziness, and many other reasons, they had failed to exterminate these idolaters, as God had

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commanded them to do, and the result had been successive relapses into idolatries and successive subjections to the idolaters themselves.

Of these times the Bible narrative says: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Yet there was a form of government under Eli, the High Priest, and there were some who refused to bow the knee to idols, and continued to worship the God of their fathers.

Eli was sixty years old as he sat between the pillars of the gateway that led to the sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. It was autumn, and from where he sat he could see the vineyards covering the sides of the fertile valley in which Shiloh lay. It was also the time of grape-gathering, which was the time of holding the Feast of Bowers, a festival which attracted pilgrims and other strangers, besides the faithful ones who came there every year to worship God and offer sacrifices to Him.

Among these devout ones was Elkanah, a man who lived at Ramah in the hills of Ephraim, and his wife Hannah. They loved each other very dearly, but God had given them no children, and this was a great grief to Hannah. She longed to hear the patter of little feet, to have chubby arms clasp her neck, and little soft cheeks pressed to hers.

Her husband tried to comfort her, and doubt-

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"SHE STOOD WITH BOWED HEAD."

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less did so, but Hannah never ceased to pray that God would give her a son, and so grant the one wish of her heart. Now she came into the Tabernacle, and Eli watched her as she stood with bowed head, eyes filled with tears, and moving lips from which no sound came, to offer to God *the first silent prayer* of which mention is anywhere made.

At last Eli approached the woman and asked her to tell him what troubled her. She told him what it was, and how she had been praying to God to give her a son, and how she had vowed to Him if He would do this and pardon her for any fault she had committed, she would devote the little one to His service as long as his life should last.

Then Eli comforted Hannah by praying himself to God to grant her petition. Then he told her to "go in peace," and she went away happy, for now she felt sure that God would answer her prayer. And He did. He sent her a little son whom she named Samuel, which means "asked of God."

Hannah did not go with her husband when the time for the Feast of Bowers came again. She staid at their home in the hills with the little Samuel, while Elkanah and the remainder of his household went to Shiloh to offer to God their yearly sacrifices and vows.

Before Samuel was born his mother devoted

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"AS LONG AS HE LIVETH, HE SHALL BE LENT TO THE LORD."



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him to the vows of a Nazarite. This word means "one separated," and was applied to one set apart from others for the service of God, either for a specified time or for life. Many persons were bound by these vows to service for a definite period, but the Bible tells us of only three who were pledged for life. These were Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

When Samuel was only a little boy, his mother decided that the time had come when she must put him under the care of Eli, the High Priest, that he might begin his life of service to God by waiting upon the priests when they offered sacrifices in the Tabernacle. So she and Elkanah went again to Shiloh, this time with the little boy for whom she had entreated God, and they took with them an offering of gratitude to Him.

As they came into the presence of the High Priest, Hannah said, "I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

So that which Hannah had vowed to do was done, and her heart was so full of love to God that she burst out into a song of praise and thankfulness. Then she left the child with Eli, but we may be very sure that her heart ached

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at parting from her little boy; but the Bible



"THEIR LITTLE BROTHER WHO WAS SERVING GOD."

tells us that she made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year, when she

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came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

It is easy to imagine Samuel growing up into a gentle, obedient boy. At first, he must have missed his mother very much, but Eli was kind to him, and there were so many things to learn that he could not have had much time to be sad. And God comforted Hannah with three more sons and two daughters; so she must have been a happy woman, taking great pleasure in telling them of their little brother who was serving God with the High Priest at Shiloh.

Now Eli had two sons, who were grown men, but they were bad men who lived evil lives and did many things which they should not do. As time went on, God sent a messenger to Eli to reprove him because of the wickedness of his sons, and because he had not punished them for their wrong doing. He also told him that the judgment of God would come upon them, for they would both die in one day, and not one of his family would succeed him in the priesthood. But a faithful priest would be found, one who would serve God forever. Still Eli shrank from punishing his sons, and God sent another messenger to him. This time it was the little boy Samuel.

It was at night when Samuel first heard the voice of God, calling him by name. All was

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"SPEAK; FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH."

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still in the Tabernacle, and dark, too, save for the dim lights of the seven-branched candlestick—the one which God had told Moses to make “of pure gold, and of beaten work”—in the sanctuary. “Samuel,” the Voice called, and, thinking it was that of Eli, the little boy ran to him and said, “Here am I; for thou calledst me.”

But Eli answered, “I called not; lie down again.” So Samuel went back to his bed and lay down. Again the Voice called “Samuel,” and again the little boy ran to Eli, saying again, “Here am I; for thou didst call me;” and again Eli replied, “I called not, my son; lie down again.”

Then God called to Samuel the third time, and once more the little boy ran to Eli, insisting that he had called him. This time Eli told him it must have been the Voice of God that he had heard; to go back to his bed, and if the Voice called again he was to answer, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.”

Samuel did as he was told, and soon the Voice was heard again. This time it called, “Samuel, Samuel,” and, remembering what Eli had told him, the boy replied, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.”

Then God told Samuel of the great punishment he was going to bring upon Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and that the whole nation



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would suffer as well. Then all was still again, and Samuel lay quietly until morning came. Then he arose and opened the doors of the Tabernacle, for it was a part of his duties to see that this was done, so that those who came early to worship could enter.

Soon Eli called to the boy, "Samuel, my son," and Samuel answered, "Here am I." And then Eli asked him, "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?"

We can understand that it was very hard for the boy to tell Eli what God had said to him: He loved Eli and did not wish to give him pain, but he knew he must tell him, and so he repeated all that God had said. And poor old Eli bowed to the will of God, saying, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

Yet quite a time passed before the promised punishment was inflicted. In the meantime Samuel grew up and it was known all over the land that God had chosen him to be a prophet. Sometimes God told him what was going to take place, and then Samuel would tell the people about it.

Then there came a time when the Israelites, the "Chosen People," as they liked to be called, had to resist an attack made upon them by the Philistines, the same people against whom Samson had waged such a great war. A battle was fought at a place called Aphek, and the

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Israelites were beaten, and about four thousand of them slain.

The chief men of Israel then consulted as to what should be done. They felt that God was offended. The army had fought bravely, but had been beaten by the Philistines, who worshipped idols. So they decided to take the Ark of the Covenant from the Tabernacle and send it to the camp, in the hope that its sacred presence would encourage the army and make it victorious in the next battle.

So the Ark of the Covenant, the most precious possession of the Israelites, was carried to the camp, attended by Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli. It was a chest covered with pure gold and had two rings on each side by which it could be carried. On the top was the mercy seat from which God had said He would commune with His people, and inside were the two tables of the law written by God Himself.

The army greeted the arrival of the sacred Ark with a tremendous cheer. So loud was the shout that it reached the ears of the enemy and discouraged them, for they felt sure that the Ark of the Lord was in the camp of the Israelites. But this knowledge spurred them to redouble their exertions, and soon both armies were preparing for another battle.

When the next battle was fought, the Philis-

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tines were again victorious. The Israelites



"WAITING FOR NEWS OF THE BATTLE."

lost their faith in the power of the Ark to protect them, and fled in terror before their foes.

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Slaying them as they went, the Philistines swept on until they reached the Ark. They captured it and Hophni and Phinehas were both killed. In all, thirty thousand Israelites were slain in this battle.

It had been a day of great anxiety for Eli. He was ninety-eight years old, infirm, and blind. For forty years he had judged Israel, and now he sat by the wayside waiting for news of the battle. The Bible says, "His heart trembled for the ark of God."

Then a messenger appeared and told Eli that he had come from the army, and the old man asked, "What is there done, my son?" So the man had to tell him the sad news; how the Israelites had been defeated with great slaughter, that his two sons were dead, and that the Ark of God was captured by the Philistines.

When Eli heard that the Ark of God was in the hands of the enemy he fell backwards from his seat, and in the fall his neck was broken and he died. So the word which God had spoken to Samuel was fulfilled.

The Philistines were very much pleased with having captured the Ark of God, for they thought it would bring good fortune to them. At first they sent it to their idol-temple in the city of Ashdod, and set it beside their god,

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Dagon, who had the head and hands of a man, with the body and tail of a fish.

But in the morning when the temple was



"HE FELL BACKWARD FROM HIS SEAT."

opened, Dagon was found fallen on his face before the Ark. He was set back again, but the next morning not only was Dagon pros-



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trated again, but his head and hands were broken off and lay upon the threshold.

A painful disease then broke out among the people of Ashdod, and they began to think that the God of Israel was offended because His Ark was in their city. So they asked the chief men of the nation to have it sent somewhere else.

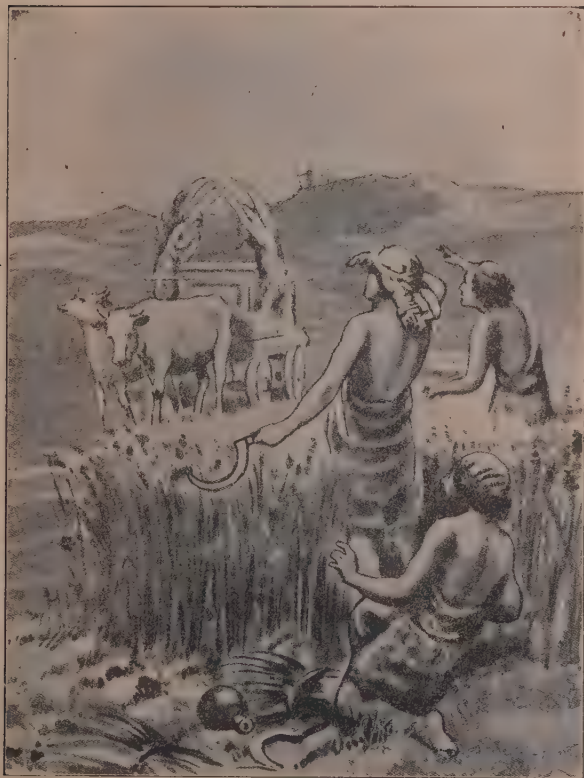
So these chief men sent the Ark to Gath, but God sent the same disease upon the people of Gath. Next, they took it to Ekron, but the Ekronites were afraid of it, and begged to have it sent away before they were all destroyed by sickness.

Ever since the Ark had been in the possession of the Philistines, it had brought nothing but misfortune to them; so there was a great consultation among the chief men and priests, and at last it was decided to send the Ark back to the Israelites. But they returned it in a very strange way.

They made a new cart, upon which they placed the Ark, and beside it was a chest in which they put an offering of gold and jewels. Then they yoked two cows to the cart and let them take whichever road they chose.

But straight toward the land of the Israelites the cows went with some of the chief men of the Philistines following them, and never once stopped until they came to a place called Beth-

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"SOME REAPERS IN A FIELD SAW THEM."

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shemesh, where there was a great stone; and when those who followed the cart saw that the lowing of the cows had attracted the attention of some reapers in a field belonging to a man named Joshua, they turned and went back to their own country.

Great was the rejoicing when the Ark was once more in the land of Israel. The priests of Beth-shemesh placed the Ark upon the stone, and then with the wood of the cart they made a great fire, and upon it they offered up the cows which had drawn it, as a burnt offering to God.

Now the Ark was the most precious thing that the Israelites had. No one was allowed to touch it but the priests. But some of the men of Beth-shemesh were curious and looked into the Ark to see the tables of stone and anything else it contained. And God was offended because they did this, and caused more than fifty thousand of them to die.

Then the people of Beth-shemesh sent messengers to the people of Kirjath-jearim asking them to take the Ark to their city. This was done. The Ark was carried to the house of a man named Abinadab, who lived in the hills, and there it remained for twenty years.

As for Shiloh, the scene of Samuel's early life, it was utterly destroyed, though no one can say with certainty how it occurred, and

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for many years afterwards all traces of it were lost.

When Samuel grew up to be a man, he became Judge over all Israel. At that time the people were worshipping idols made of wood and stone, instead of the living and true God who had done so much for them, and in consequence were continually harassed by the nations about them, particularly by the Philistines.

They complained to Samuel, but he told them that they could not expect God to prosper them when they were continually turning from Him and praying to false gods. Then he told them that the time had come when they must put away their idols and serve God only. He succeeded in touching the hearts of the people, and they all gathered together at a place called Mizpeh, where they fasted and confessed their sins.

When the Philistines heard of this great gathering at Mizpeh, they decided it was a good time to attack the Israelites once more. But God was on the side of the penitent Israelites, and sent a terrible thunder-storm, which so confused the Philistines that they turned and fled in dismay.

Then the Israelites pursued them and defeated them so badly that they were glad to reach their own country and leave Israel in

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peace. Not only this, they restored the cities they had taken and troubled the Israelites no more during Samuel's life.

Samuel ruled the Israelites with patience and justice for many years. He visited their cities, heard their troubles, and then told them what to do. He established schools in some of the larger towns, where young men could study. These schools were not much like those we have now. They were for the study of ancient records from a religious point of view, the composition and chanting of sacred songs, and the cultivation of natural gifts as far as they were understood at that time.

The home of Samuel was at Ramah, the place where he was born. He built himself a house there, and also an altar unto the Lord. He had visions and revelations, which caused him to be revered by the people, and everywhere he was held in the highest esteem.

Samuel had two sons, Joel and Abiah, and when he grew old he made them judges over the people who lived in Beer-sheba. Remembering the trouble that had darkened Eli's life, we may be sure that Samuel had brought up his sons carefully, and had shown them how to deal justly with the people.

But in spite of all this, his sons did wrong. They were so dishonest and unfaithful that the elders of Israel went to Samuel's house at



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Ramah, and told him that his sons were unfit to rule Israel after his death, as they would natu-



"THEY BEGGED THEY MIGHT HAVE A KING."

rally do. They begged that they might have a king to rule over them like the other nations.

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At first Samuel was hurt and offended, but when they insisted that they would have a king and no other form of government, he prayed to God to show him what to do. And God told Samuel to grant their request, notwithstanding they had continually disobeyed Him and had set up false gods.

But first he was to tell the people how cruelly a king would treat them, and to warn them that in their trouble he would not help them. Samuel did as God told him, but his warnings were thrown away, for the people had set their hearts upon having a king. Then God said to Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king."

Now this is what Samuel did. There was a mighty man of the tribe of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, and he had a son named Saul, who was a very handsome man and taller than any man in Israel. One day Saul went with one of his father's servants to find a number of animals which had strayed away.

After a while, Saul found that they were a long way from home, and thought it best to give up the search, fearing his father would be worried at their absence. But they had now come to the place where Samuel lived, and, knowing him to be a prophet, they decided to ask him if he could tell them where the lost animals were. So they inquired for Samuel,

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"SO THEY INQUIRED FOR SAMUEL."

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and were told that he was just going to bless the sacrifice and afterwards eat with his guests.

Now the Lord had warned Samuel that the man who was to be king would come that day. So when they met, Samuel invited Saul to eat with him and be his guest until the next day, and he also told him not to be worried about the lost animals, for they had been found. Saul was modest and could not understand why he was so well treated, but Samuel made him take the seat of honor among the company he had invited to meet their future king, and after the feast he took him to his own house.

The next day, early in the morning, Samuel and Saul went out together, and Samuel told Saul to send his servant on ahead where he could not see them. Then he took a vial of oil which he had brought for the purpose, and poured it on his head, telling him that God had chosen him to be King of Israel. Then he told him what would happen to him on his way home.

First he would meet two men and learn from them that the lost animals had been found. Then he would meet three men who would salute him and give him food, and lastly, that he should meet a company of prophets, and that he should join them and prophesy with them. All these things happened, and when Saul reached home he told his people about them,

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"HE SHOULD MEET A COMPANY OF PROPHETS."

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but he did not say that he had been anointed King of Israel.

After that, Samuel again called the people together at Mizpeh, and Saul and his friends were there. Then Samuel told the people his message from the Lord, that they had rejected Him who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, by asking that a king should rule over them.

Then he caused each tribe to pass before him, until the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then Saul was called, but he was not to be found. He had hidden himself, being too modest to face the people as their king. But when they found him and looked upon his splendid figure as it towered above them, they were pleased and shouted, "God save the king." Thus simply was Saul elected King of Israel.

Samuel then drew up laws for the government of the kingdom, and wrote them in a book, which was carefully laid away; and after the people had done homage to their King, and had made him presents, each man went away to his own home. There was one body of men, however, called the children of Belial, who were angry because Saul was not chosen from one of the larger and more important tribes, so they refused to have anything to do with him.

Saul went to his own home at Gibeah, and one day news came to him that a people called the Ammonites had gone up against Jabesh-



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"THEY LOOKED UPON HIS PLANNED FIGURE."

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gilead, and would only spare it on one condition. The people of the city must consent to have their right eyes put out. The elders of the city had asked and obtained seven days' grace in which to find help somewhere.

Saul was collecting his father's sheep and cattle when this was told to him. It made him very angry, and he determined to let his people know that he was their defender as well as their ruler. He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent portions to the different tribes of Israel with a message that if they did not follow him to battle with the Ammonites, their oxen would be cut to pieces in like manner.

The tribes responded so well to the call of their King that, when Saul counted his army, he found he had over three hundred thousand warriors. Then he sent word to the people of Jabesh-gilead that on the next day he and this great army would be there to help them.

When the battle was fought, it was a terrible one; but Saul smote the Ammonites from early morning until the middle of the day, and scattered them so that no two of them were left together. And the people began to trust in the King the Lord had chosen for them. Then they remembered how the children of Belial had refused to pay homage to Saul at Mizpeh, and called loudly on him to take vengeance on

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"HE PRAYED THAT THE LORD WOULD SEND A THUNDER-STORM."

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them. But Saul was merciful as well as brave, and said in reply: "There shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel."

Then Samuel, whose authority over the people was still great, called them together at Gilgal, and the Bible says of this great assembly: "And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly."

Then Samuel spoke to the people, telling them he was now old and gray-headed, and appealing to them whether he had not walked before them honestly all his days, having neither defrauded them nor oppressed them. And the people said it was so—that he had not "taken ought of any man's hand."

Then Samuel repeated to them all the ways in which the Lord had led them since they came up out of the land of Egypt. He reminded them of the times they had rebelled against Him, and how He had forgiven them. He called upon them to fear the Lord and serve Him with truth, assuring them that if they should continue to do wickedly, He would destroy both them and their King.

Then, to prove the power of God, he prayed that the Lord would send a thunder-storm, and

## THE BOY AT SCHOOL.

soon the rain began to fall, while thunder and lightning terrified the people. Then when the people besought Samuel to pray for them he



"THEN SAMUEL SPOKE TO THE PEOPLE."

did so, and also spoke very tenderly to them.

After Saul had reigned for two years, the Philistines again became troublesome. They were a people remarkable for unusual stature,

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warlike habits, and a great variety of weapons and armor, but with all this they were dull-witted. The word Palestine, one of the names of the Holy Land, is really another form of the word Philistia, which in those days was the name of the land occupied by those formidable enemies of the Israelites.

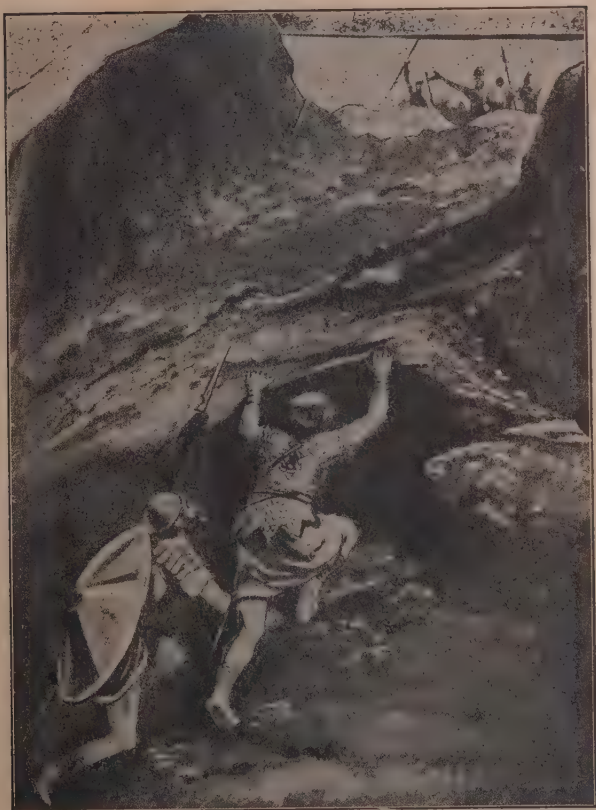
The Philistines gathered together a mighty army with which to fight Saul and his people. They had thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and so many fighting men that the Bible narrative says they were "as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude." The men of Israel were so frightened at this array that, instead of giving them battle, they hid themselves wherever they could.

Then Saul went to Samuel and asked his advice. Samuel told him to wait in a certain place for seven days. There he would join him, and they would offer a sacrifice to God, and ask Him to help the distressed nation. The seven days passed and Saul grew impatient. He did not wait for Samuel, but ordered a sacrifice prepared and offered it himself.

Then Samuel appeared and told Saul that, because of this disobedience, no one of his family should inherit the throne. God would choose, instead, a man after His own heart. Then Samuel went away, but it is not unlikely that he prayed to God that the Philistines might



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"JONATHAN DID A VERY BRAVE THING."

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not conquer Israel, for just at this time Jonathan, the son of Saul, did a very brave thing, which resulted in the defeat of the Philistines.

With no one with him but his armor-bearer, Jonathan, trusting in God to help him, went out and killed twenty of the enemy. This caused a panic in the camp of the Philistines, and Saul, hearing of it, followed it up and gained a great victory.

Some time after this, Samuel again visited Saul, and told him that God wished him to utterly destroy the Amalekites. They were a very wicked nation, and not one of them was to be left alive. All their cattle and sheep and camels were to be destroyed also.

So Saul fought the Amalekites and killed all of them except Agag, their king. He also saved the best of the sheep and cattle. Then he went and told Samuel that he had "performed the commandment of the Lord." But Samuel asked, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" And Saul replied that he had spared them for a sacrifice to the Lord.

Samuel then told Saul that obedience was better than sacrifice. That he had not done as the Lord had commanded him, and that for this disobedience he would be cast aside and would be no longer King. Saul begged that he might not be humbled before the people, and his re-

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"WHAT IS THIS LOWING OF OXEN THAT I HEAR?"

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quest was granted. But Samuel slew Agag, the King of the Amalekites, with his own hand, saying as he did so, "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." Then Samuel and Saul parted, never to see each other again. Yet Samuel loved Saul, and mourned that his disobedience was to cost him his life.

Then God told Samuel to go to Jesse, the grandson of Ruth and Boaz, and take anointing oil with him, for He had provided a king for Israel among Jesse's sons. So Samuel went to Beth-lehem, where he made a solemn sacrifice to the Lord before the people.

And when Samuel saw Eliab, Jesse's oldest son, he thought he was the one who would be chosen, for he was beautiful to look upon. But God told him Eliab was not the one He had chosen; He did not judge by the outward appearance, but by the heart. Then all the seven sons of Jesse were brought to Samuel, but he told their father that God had chosen none of them.

Then Samuel asked Jesse if he had any other sons, and Jesse replied that there was one more, the youngest, who was tending the sheep; and Samuel ordered him to be brought. When David, for that was his name, appeared, God told Samuel to anoint him, as he was to be the new King of Israel. So Samuel poured the oil

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upon David's head as he stood there among his brothers; and "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."

At the same time, the Spirit of the Lord left Saul, and an evil spirit began to trouble him. To drive away this spirit, his servants proposed that a skillful musician should be brought to soothe him. David was the one selected, and his music on the harp soothed the unhappy Saul.

Saul grew very fond of David and showed him a great deal of kindness, but after a time he tried to kill him, not once, but several times. Then David took refuge in Samuel's house in Ramah, and Saul tried to take him from there, but was unable to do so.

Saul fought another great battle with the Philistines, and was defeated. Three of his sons were killed and Saul himself was badly wounded. He did not wish to live, and so he asked his armor-bearer to kill him, but as the man would not, he killed himself with his own sword.

But before Saul's death, and not long after he had tried to take David from Samuel's house, Samuel died, and the whole nation gathered together at Ramah and mourned for him, and there buried him with great honors.









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